

Construction or Remodeling of Permanent Food Service Facilities Plan Review FAQ

Do I need to involve the Health Department if I plan to build or remodel a restaurant?

Yes. Health Department approval of plans for a new, remodeled, or materially altered facility is required *before any construction*. Upon approval of the final plans and a satisfactory preopening inspection, you may apply for a food service facility license which is necessary for you to operate. Therefore you need three things from the Health Department: review and approval of plans prior to construction, pre-opening inspection, and a food service facility license prior to operating.

How do I seek Health Department approval for my new or remodeled restaurant/food service facility?

Review the "Step-by-Step Instructions for Plan Review" on the [Plan Review Web Page](#) and submit documents listed in the [Plan Review Packet](#). A checklist within the packet will help you be sure to include the required documents but *please call the Food Protection Program at 410-313-1772 if you are unsure*, as incomplete submissions delay the review process.

How long does it take for the Health Department to respond to my submittal?

The Food Protection Program reviewers will respond to you in email or writing within 10-15 business days regarding the review of your plan and if additional information is required to complete the review. Information submitted in piecemeal fashion may delay the complete review.

What is the typical timeline for the Plan Review process?

- 10-15 business days for the review of the plan depending on the completeness of the initial submittal
- Depending upon the complexity of the materials, up to 15 business days for review after you submit any additional required materials
- If changes are made to the plans/building after the plans have been approved, this can pose significant problems and delays

The Food Protection Program cannot approve equipment or layouts that do not comply with the requirements of the Maryland Code of Regulations governing Food Service Facilities COMAR 10.15.03.

What could trigger a delay in the Health Department's approval of my submittal?

Approval of your submission depends on the compliance with COMAR of the proposed plans for the food service facility. Delays in approval can be caused by:

- Incomplete submittals

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- Incomplete responses to Health Department requests for additional clarification
- Additional changes after submittal
- Non-standard food processes and/or equipment
- Non-payment of fees

What fees will I have to pay, and when?

There are two fees. See [Fee Schedule](#)

- The plan review fee for review of your menu/HACCP/facility plans is paid after the complete submittal has been reviewed.
- A separate fee for your food facility license is paid with your application prior to pre-opening inspection.

The fee for both the plan review and the food service license depends on whether the facility is assessed as a low, moderate, or high priority facility. Payment of these fees is through check/money order payable to "Director of Finance."

If I have received Health Department approval of my building/remodeling plans and construction is nearing completion, how can I know when to schedule my Grand Opening?

- Make sure you are in communication with the Howard County Department of Inspections, Licenses, and Permits (410-313-2455) so that you are aware of the progress of required building, electrical and plumbing permits.
- **Call the Health Department Food Protection Program at 410-313-1772 to schedule a pre-opening inspection at least two weeks in advance of the anticipated opening.** Allow time prior to opening to resolve any outstanding issues from the pre-opening inspection.
- Prior to the pre-opening inspection, submit the Food Service Facility License Application and pay the license fee.

For assistance or to schedule inspections call the Food Protection Program at 410-313-1772.

What if my renovations are part of a change in ownership of a food facility?

Please see the [Change of Restaurant Ownership Web Page](#) where you will find Step by Step Instructions and FAQs for Change of Ownership.

What determines whether my facility is assigned High, Moderate, or Low Priority?

Priority is based upon Health Department review of the menu and food service processes which are incorporated in the HACCP Plan. In the case of a health care facility a higher priority is assigned. The assigned priority determines the frequency of routine Health Department inspections of the facility.

Where can I access information about the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Plan?

Information and instructions are available in the [HACCP Guidelines](#). The Guidelines provide several examples and four different ways that you can organize your HACCP Plan. Use the approach you prefer.

What are Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)?

Food service facility SOPs are written procedures describing your food service facility's daily operations to ensure food safety. SOPs provide detailed descriptions of sanitation, employee hygiene, equipment, maintenance, and food service processes. SOPs should be used in training employees to complete tasks in a consistent way. The [SOP Guidelines](#) can assist in creating your SOPs.

How do I get a Howard County Food Service Manager's Card?

The following items are required to obtain the card (needed for High and Moderate facilities only):

1. [Food Service Manager Card Application](#) must be presented by the applicant in person with photo identification and one 2" by 2" photograph
2. Original copy of a Certified Manager's Certificate. The following ANSI certified training certificates are acceptable:
 - Serv Safe
 - National Registry of Food Safety Professionals
 - 360 Training
 - Prometric, Inc.
 - State Food Safety Manager Certification
3. \$17 fee paid by Check or Money Order payable to Director of Finance (cash in the exact amount is acceptable)

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